

Trustees' Reflections 2023

Derwen[!]
College



Registered Charity No. 1153280
Company Registration No. 8615826.

Contents

The Trustees and co-opted members of the charity	3
The College's Mission, Strategic Priorities and Values	4
2023	
△ External recognition and involvement	5
△ Snapshots of highlights and activities in 2023	9
The students in 2023	
△ Student cohort	14
△ Pathways and programmes	15
△ Outcomes	
The clients in 2023	17
Excellent performance and quality	
△ Internally	18
△ Inspection and public recognition	19
Development projects	22
Leadership, management and staffing	23
Governance	
△ The development of the charity	24
△ The regulatory framework	24
△ Governance activity in 2023	25
Financial management	
△ A going concern	26
△ Risk management	26
△ Public benefit	27
△ Fundraising	28
△ Investment policy and performance	28
Where next?	28

The trustees (governors), who are also the directors, of Derwen College Charity here report on the activities of the charity in 2023

- △ Kathleen Kimber – Chair and Chair of Search and Governance
- △ Mark Lord – Vice-Chair
- △ Lucy Beaumont
- △ Louise Burns – Chair of Audit and Risk Assurance
- △ Barbara Court
- △ Michael Cowan – Chair of Standards and Effectiveness
- △ Vicki Cox – Vice-Chair of Audit and Risk Assurance
- △ Paul Evison
- △ Andrew Grove
- △ Elizabeth Leigh – Vice-Chair of Standards and Effectiveness
- △ David Preston
- △ Jamie Ward – Chair of Business and Resources

Committee co-optees

- △ Paul Crosby
- △ Barry Langfield – Vice-Chair of Business and Resources
- △ Abigail Plowden
- △ Helen Smith
- △ Carol Thompson – Clerk and Company Secretary
- △ Mark Baker – Governance Professional

We place on record our sincere thanks to all trustees and co-opted committee members who have given generously of their time and constructively of their experience and wisdom. We have been delighted to welcome four new members of the Board. All members are working hard to become familiar with the College's operation and those whom it serves following enforced absence during Covid-19.

Much information about the charity, its activities and endeavours is to be found on the website:
www.derwen.ac.uk



The College's Mission, Strategic Priorities and Values

Mission: to enable everyone to achieve beyond what they and others believe possible.

Strategic Priorities: priorities serve to promote the College's purpose: the development and care of students and residents.

→ Ensure our long-term sustainability

Areas of focus

- △ Rigorous financial management
- △ Constant review and update of provision
- △ Appropriate diversification
- △ Risk assurance measures
- △ Environmental commitment

→ Excel in every aspect of our operation

Areas of focus

- △ Student programmes and outcomes
- △ Our holistic approach to people
- △ Quality assurance
- △ Staff CPD and performance management
- △ Staff wellbeing
- △ Compliance monitoring
- △ Response to changing legislative environment and the SEND landscape
- △ Being a learning organisation

→ Make the most of our exceptional resources

Areas of focus

- △ Accommodation review and planning
- △ Campus management
- △ Commercial developments
- △ Satellite opportunities
- △ Safeguarding
- △ Partnerships

→ Be trailblazers, initiators and researchers

Areas of focus

- △ Our position / reputation within the sector
- △ Risk appetite
- △ Initiatives and innovations
- △ Marketing, publicity and communication with stakeholders
- △ Award applications
- △ Build thirst for increased understanding

The College's Values:



2023

External recognition and involvement

Derwen College received Silver Makaton status, the first specialist college to be given this recognition. The College is now officially part of the Makaton Friendly community. Silver status is currently the Makaton Charity's highest possible accreditation.



Our charity shop, The Vintage Advantage, won a top national award at the Charity Retail Awards – the 'Oscars' of the charity shop world. We won the Innovation Award and were at the awards alongside big charity names such as Oxfam, Scope, British Heart Foundation, Shelter and Barnardo's.



The Derwen Sports and Leisure team won an award for the College tennis programme. Tennis Shropshire presented the award at the British Tennis County Awards in the 'School of the Year' category.



The College was a finalist in the WorldSkills UK EDI Heroes Awards 2023, and won an award in the Skills Competitions Advocate category. Awards organisers also filmed at the College and put together a film showcasing some of our work around skills competitions.

www.derwen.me/WorldSkills.



In October, the College was awarded Further Education Provider of the Year at the NASEN Awards, for outstanding work in supporting young people with SEND to reach their full potential.

Derwen Nurses Hearing Project: This Nurse led project was a finalist in the Royal College of Nursing Awards, Learning Disability Nursing category. The project was shortlisted from a total of 920 entries nationally. Their project, focusing on undiagnosed hearing problems in young people with SEND, has been put forward for publication.

SEND and Alternative Provision (AP) Improvement Plan

Following the SEND Review the Department for Education announced the £70m 'SEND Change Programme' partnership areas. These pilot areas, of which West Midlands is one, will test various elements of the Improvement Plan, starting with the creation of Local Inclusion Partnerships and the development of Local Area Inclusion Plans. Telford and Wrekin are the lead and Derwen College is engaging closely with them.

Various elements of the SEND and AP Review Improvement Plan will be tested over a two-year period, underpinned by the three overarching aims identified in the Review:

- △ a better experience of the system for families
- △ better outcomes for young people with SEND
- △ a cost effective, sustainable system

Progress towards a standard, digitised EHCP (Education, Health & Care Plan) is well underway but there is little progress reported around the development of 'National Standards'. The overwhelming focus of this work continues to be on schools.

AoC College Collective

Following a direct approach from the Chief Executive of the Association of Colleges, Derwen College is now part of the AoC College Collective, a peer sharing group of high performing colleges. Participating colleges put forward 3 experts each year who then receive coaching, training and accreditation from the Institute of Leadership and Management. They are then 'matched' with appropriate colleges to provide input in their specialist areas. Derwen, in turn, receives coaching around identified improvement areas from up to 3 experts from other colleges within the Collective.





Derwen International

Derwen College has been sharing expertise and working with the Kuwait Society for the Handicapped (KSH) to create and develop the country's first ever specialist further education college, Gharnata Training Centre. KSH are a 40 year old charity whose values align closely with those of Derwen College. They have a wonderful track record of setting up three schools for children with SEND, and as such, are a role model for other organisations in the region. The Centre replicates Derwen's model of vocational learning and work experience, combined with embedded functional skills and learning around independent living. The initial pathways available to students will be:

- △ Business Administration
- △ Hospitality and Food



The KSH team have been focused on staffing, buildings and equipment. They have demonstrated a greater personalisation of learning, moving away from the traditional medical model to bespoke packages to support each student individually. The Derwen Teaching and Learning Programme for Post-16 with SEND includes modules in Inclusive Learning for SEND, Vocational Pathway Training, Exploring Autism and Exploring Down Syndrome.

Snapshots of highlights and activities in 2023:

January

A former student and client Richard Keagan-Bull came to talk to students, clients and members of the community about his remarkable life and autobiography *Don't Put Us Away*. Richard found a talent as a speaker and ambassador for people with special educational needs and disabilities. He has travelled the world with organisation L'Arche.



Our therapy dog: Teddy is a flat coated retriever who joined the Derwen College family back in 2019 when he was just 18 months old. A crucial part of Teddy's training was to learn to socialise with students. It is immensely rewarding to see just how calm and friendly he is in all situations, providing comfort and support to students. One says 'He always helps you when you're feeling upset'.



February

Former Blue Peter presenter and Doctor Who actor Peter Purves took a mini tour of College. Peter had a role in a television pilot, created by local film company Rocking Horse Media, which was filmed at Derwen College.

March

National Careers Week, the most successful and varied yet. All pathways created inspiring events, workshops and talks to help students to think about their future careers. Industry Champions shared knowledge and answered questions about their businesses, former students joined in on Teams to talk about their futures after Derwen, Supported Interns explained how they were further honing their work skills to prepare for employment, and experts delivered interactive workshops. Performing Arts were even joined by some famous faces, including actors Annette Badland and our very own Adult Student of the Year graduate Amy Jude!

Competitions Week and a host of events across all college pathways and sites. Retail invited students to participate in a live Easter-themed Visual Merchandising Challenge at the Garden Centre and Gift Shop. Hospitality and Food ran a roast dinner competition; Performing Arts had a talent show, and Learning for Life ran a smaller in-house competition. The winners of the recent poetry and Employability competitions were announced. During breaks and lunchtimes, there were gaming competitions, open to staff and students.

The Spinathon – 24 hours of spin bike pedalling. Students, clients and staff from all sections of the College kept all the bikes moving, encouraged throughout the evening and night by special entertainment.



The Student Union Board visited the Houses of Parliament to find out more about the democratic process and British values. They took odd socks with them for World Down Syndrome Day and presented them to Helen Morgan MP. They also enjoyed a performance of The Lion King.

April

Retail's Tia Hughes raised more than £1000 from her skydive over the Easter holidays.

Derwen beekeepers were checking up on our three hives of bees, making sure the colonies were safe, clean, happy and well-fed.



May

Duke of Edinburgh's Awards: many staff supported students on expeditions. Here it's the turn of Nurture students who are embarking on their first ever expedition on a canal boat on the Llangollen Canal, near Ellesmere, with the help of accessible canal boat providers the **Lyneal Trust**.



Digi Dave Robinson and students, who worked in front of and behind the camera, helped Iain Evans of National Numeracy to produce a video highlighting anxieties around maths and numeracy, and how we use maths every day. The video was released for National Numeracy Day, on 17 May, at <https://derwen.me/NationalNumeracy>

June

A Walford student enjoyed a day as a ticket inspector, as thanks for his work experience at Cambrian Heritage Railways. Supported by a support practitioner and accompanied by railway volunteers and passengers, Harry boarded the new Wednesday service to Weston.

July

Four students were supported to create their own singles by local musician Jon Roberts. Jon met the students when they performed as soloists at the charity concert, organised by a trustee. He was so impressed with their talents that he brought his specialist equipment into College to record all four soloists. He then went away and edited them, providing each learner with a copy of their own single.



Attendees at the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Celebration learnt that in the last year 23 students completed their Gold Award. 22 received Silver awards and 24 Bronze.

Staff and students at Gobowen site limbered up for the annual Donald Davis Memorial Football Match. What a great atmosphere with some silky skills displayed on the pitch, and great support and cheerleading on the sideline. Later, residential students and staff enjoyed a mass water fight.

October

Derwen partnered with Severn Dee Travel and Gobowen Station Buildings Trust to put on a 175th birthday bash for the Chester to Shrewsbury railway line. Sign, song and dance group DOT (Derwen on Tour) performed 'Reach for the Stars' and Hospitality and Food students served drinks and canapes to visitors outside the Station Cafe. The Retail team staffed a pop-up shop on the station, which was set up especially for the day by the Commercial team. The shop was a mini showcase of the Derwen Marketplace.

Graduation ceremony at Lion Quays, Oswestry. It was an emotional weekend when the achievements of 2023 graduates were celebrated at The Lion Quays, near Oswestry. Forty former students and their families, as well as local supporters, attended the momentous occasion to celebrate the inspirational achievements of our students.

Sports and Leisure Coordinator Steve Evans was invited to a reception at London's 10 Downing Street by MP Gillian Keegan, Secretary of State for Education. The event was to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Teaching Awards Trust. Steve won a Gold teaching award in 2021 for his work within sports and leisure and Duke of Edinburgh's Awards. He has since become an ambassador for the awards, and has been asked to join founder, David Puttnam, colleagues from the Department for Education, and past award winners.

The Horticulture team were honoured to receive The Chair's Award for exceptional work in the Oswestry in Bloom Awards. Nursery and Production Manager Paul Moss accepted the impressive metalwork trophy for the work that he and our students and clients carried out in Oswestry, including designing and planting stunning displays of bedding plants and perennials in Cae Glas Park. More than 100 people attended the ceremony, which was a wonderful celebration of the community working together.

November



Staff helped to promote Road Safety Week. West Mercia Community Police officers visited College to advise students on road safety awareness. A group of students also joined Councillor Craig Emery as part of the local parish council's Speed Watch campaign in Gobowen.

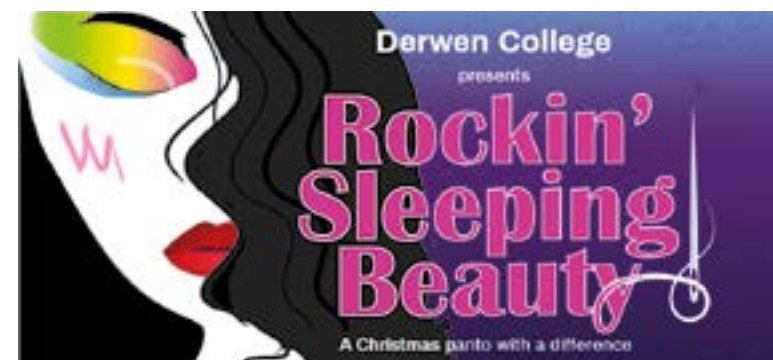
Cllr Emery showed them how to use a speed gun to monitor traffic along Whittington Road.

Derwen Christmas Fayre Weekend.



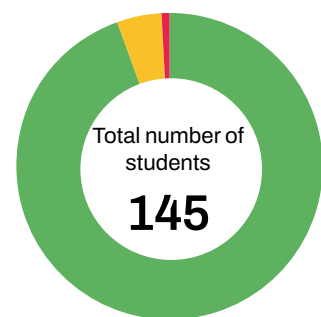
December

Christmas Show

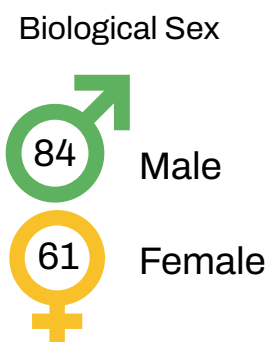
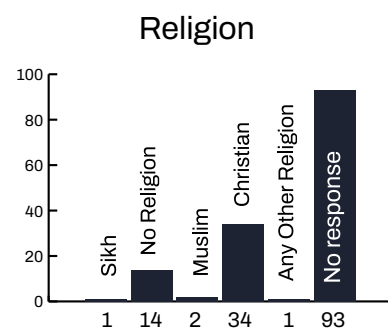


Christmas Parade in Oswestry

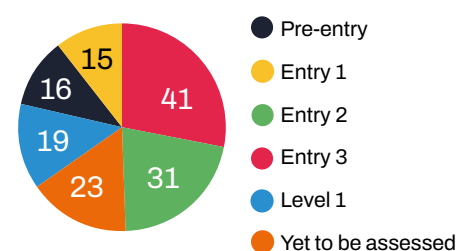


Derwen
CollegeStudent Cohort 2023
Autumn Term

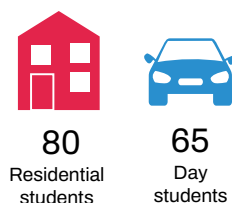
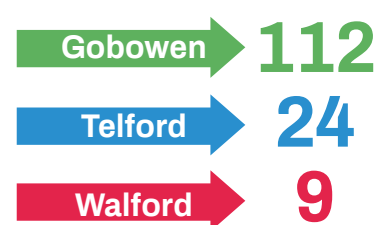
● Students on Study Programme: 137
● Students on Supported Internship: 7
● Students on Springboard: 1



Number of students working at each level



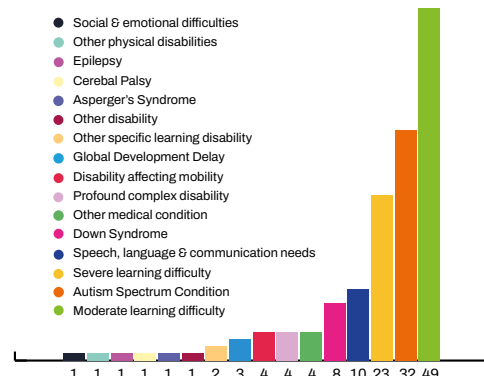
Number of students at each site



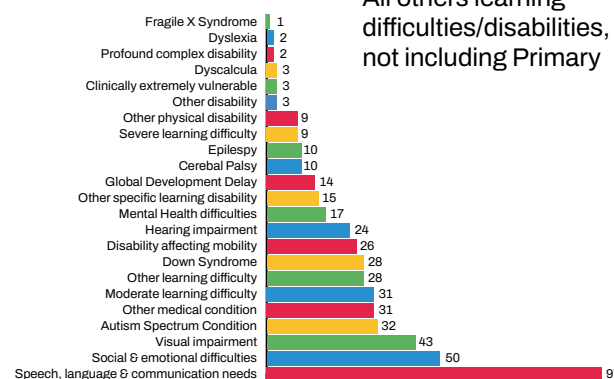
Learner's main Pathway



Primary learning difficulties/disabilities



All others learning difficulties/disabilities, not including Primary



Pathways and programmes

During the admissions process, students make an informed choice about which pathway or programme to embark on when they start college. Pathways are detailed programmes, adopting a holistic approach to student development, and constantly under review. The following pathways and programmes are available:

Gobowen Main Site: residential and day

- △ Horticulture (vocational pathway)
- △ Hospitality and Food (vocational pathway)
- △ Retail and Enterprise (vocational pathway)
- △ Performing Arts (vocational pathway)
- △ Learning for Life (programme)
- △ Nurture (programme)
- △ Springboard (programme)*
- △ Supported Internships (programme)



Telford: day provision

- △ Business Support, Sales and Marketing (vocational pathway)
- △ Hospitality (vocational pathway)
- △ Learning for Life (programme)
- △ Springboard (programme)*
- △ Supported Internships (programme)



Walford: day provision

- △ Horticulture (vocational pathway)
- △ Sport and Fitness (vocational pathway)
- △ Learning for Life (programme)
- △ Springboard (programme)*
- △ Supported Internships (programme)



Ludlow: day provision

- △ Business Support, Sales and Enterprise (vocational pathway)
- △ Learning for Life (programme)
- △ Springboard (programme)*
- △ Supported Internships (programme)



* Springboard is funded through social care

Provision at Ludlow was suspended in February 23.

Independence This may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Travel training Skills in the home, such as preparing and cooking food, laundry, hoovering Skills in the community, such as shopping, budgeting, personal safety 	Functional Skills Functional Skills comprises of English, maths and ICT and is delivered through small discrete groups and embedded into every aspect of the pathway. It is linked to vocational activities and everyday life.
Sport, leisure and wellbeing There is an extensive range of wellbeing activities at evenings and weekends for residential students. These include swimming, gym, football, Boccia, arts, karaoke, cinema, theatre and shopping trips. Special occasions are celebrated including prize-giving, prom, religious festivals, and events, and all students are invited to take part.	Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance (CEIAG) CEIAG is an integral part of the programme. Students on a vocational pathway take part in small group employability sessions. External guests are also invited to talk to students about their experiences outside of College. Impartial CEIAG is also provided by an external Careers Lead.
Learner Voice and Student Union Board Derwen College Student Union (SU) is affiliated to the National Union of Students. Each October, students vote for who they want to represent them on the SU Board. There is one representative and one deputy representative from each pathway. Students learn how to communicate their likes, dislikes, and thoughts, and how to represent the thoughts of other students to make Derwen College a special place for all of them.	Universal therapy provision All students benefit from access to therapy services enabling a universal approach to developing independence in preparation for adulthood and transition post-College.
Personal, social and health education (PSHE) Learners take part in all of the following PSHE modules: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online safety – modules 1, 2 and 3 Managing relationships Rights and cultures Drugs and alcohol awareness Moving on Relationships and sex education, including bespoke support for anyone who needs it. 	Specialist therapy provision Specialist therapy need should be identified in the EHCP or IDP, but the therapy team may recommend additions/alterations to outcomes and further therapy provision. A student's specialist provision will be reviewed regularly, to ensure it meets their needs in the College environment. Therapy will be delivered in the most appropriate way to enable students to achieve their individual goals and outcomes. The students also have time to spend with the College therapy dog.
	Targeted therapy provision Targeted therapy provision is available following referral to the integrated therapy team.

Outcomes

Student progress against their Education Health Care Plans and their agreed personal targets is closely monitored. The number of students proceeding to part-time employment, voluntary work or further education has increased, although their learning difficulties and disabilities are more complex than in previous years.

Destination outcomes – Planned				
Year	Actual 21–22		Planned to date 22–23	
Leavers	43		41	
Work				
Paid work 16hrs+	1	2.33%	0	0%
Paid work less than 16hrs	4	9.30%	4	9.75%
Voluntary work	9	20.93%	10	24.39%
Local College or training programme	16	37.21%	12	29.27%
Not in paid employment but looking for work	6	13.95%	1	2.44%
Community activities	3	6.98%		
Plans not finalised at this stage	4	9.30%	14	34.15%
Living				
Supported independent living	10	23.26%	16	39.02%
Residential placement	2	4.65%	1	2.44%
Living with family	17	39.53%		
Living with family pending Supported Living	7	16.28%		
Awaiting confirmation of plans	7	16.28%	24	58.54%

National average of young people with SEND going into work – 5.4%

The clients in 2023

It is one of the objects of Derwen College charity that we provide accommodation for people with disabilities and learning difficulties. The trustees have worked closely with the Senior Leadership Team and have reviewed the provision we make within this objective and what that means for our clients, our residents, of whom there were 31 in 2023. Our commitment is to offer high quality supported living and to continue to look at:

- △ how we provide for the wellbeing of the clients
- △ how we can ensure their long-term security
- △ what we can do to offer meaningful activity in their daily lives
- △ how we offer care and support

and how we do this within current regulations and concepts of best practice. Derwen Care has been established to provide support for those needing it. All clients now have an up to date tenancy agreement. Clients have access to many activities, both on and off site. For example, they enjoy helping in Vintage Advantage, our charity shop, and contributing to Oswestry in Bloom success in Cae Glas Park.

Excellent performance and quality

The College, a learning establishment, is characterised by a drive for continuous improvement and has strong and varied processes of reflection, evaluation and analysis. The Quality Assurance Calendar (QAC) is updated annually and gives an overview of the depth and breadth of activity to review performance and to take learning from the outcomes, so that improvement can be made. There is a strong culture of undertaking continuous professional development, commissioning audits and reports, including from external bodies, to gain the benefit of additional expertise and insight. Similarly, peer-working and scrutiny are actively pursued, both with Derwen team members being invited to review others' work, and the College having reciprocal input about its working.

Internally

There is a well-established, thorough and transparent self-assessment system. Quality and the achievement of Improvement Plan targets are monitored throughout the year and the formal departmental evaluations of performance and outcomes are moderated at the end of the summer term by panels, which include trustees. The comprehensive self-assessment and data analysis support the following judgements for the College's performance 22 – 23

- **Overall effectiveness: Good**
- Quality of education: Good
- Behaviours and attitudes: Outstanding
- Personal development: Outstanding
- Leadership and management: Good
- Safeguarding: Effective

The audit and monitoring procedures ensure reflection on specific experiences and activities and lead to the lessons learnt being shared and implemented across the College.

Inspection and public recognition

External Quality Assurers' feedback from awarding bodies is extremely positive. The College holds the Matrix Standard and was re-accredited in 2021.

The College was inspected by Ofsted, under the new Inspection Framework, from 9–11 November 2021, gaining the following grades:

△ Overall effectiveness	Good
△ The quality of education	Good
△ Behaviour and attitudes	Outstanding
△ Personal development	Good
△ Leadership and management	Good
△ Provision for learners with high needs	Good

The report included:

Senior leaders have created a caring, calm and inclusive environment for staff and students. Staff have high standards and clear expectations of learners' behaviour. As a result, staff support learners well. Learners' behaviour and attitudes are exceptional, and they make good progress in their vocational course and independent living skills.

Learners become more independent in their personal lives. Through regular tutorials, learners participate in discussions and take more control of their decision making.

They improve their ability to travel, shop, cook and manage their personal laundry. As they acquire these skills, they move successfully into more independent living arrangements.

Learners benefit from a wide range of extra-curricular activities... Learners are encouraged to join the thriving student union and to represent their fellow students... Representatives improve their communication skills and negotiate improvements for the benefit of all learners.

The Care Quality Commission carried out a focused inspection on 16 and 17 November 2022, reviewing specific areas identified in their 2019 inspection. The College has the following grades:

- △ Is the service safe? Good
- △ Is the service effective? Good
- △ Is the service caring? Good
- △ Is the service responsive? Good
- △ Is the service well led? Good

During the regular monitoring of Food Safety and Hygiene standards all residences were awarded a five-star rating.

Many members of the public do not understand learning difficulties and disabilities and their impact on individuals – and on those closest to them. Progress is equally difficult to understand. What may seem a small and inconsequential step to some people is, in fact, a major achievement and life changing. Staff and trustees are committed to ensuring life-enhancing progress for students and clients and feedback from families brings constant testimony to such progress.



From the mother of a student, following a Marketing write up about her son for a case study

Oh, this article made me so tearful. Such a wonderful read. In terms of my input, I'd just like to add: Mainstream school was difficult for (student). He was a tiny fish in a big pond who struggled to stay afloat. His needs were never fully met and he just stopped growing as a person. That all changed when he was given the opportunity to attend Derwen. It was like a switch was flicked and he just woke up. It has been wonderful seeing him grow in confidence and to explore who he is in a safe environment. When he was chosen as student representative, we were thrilled. This was the first time he'd been accepted by his peers. Things have just gone from strength to strength from then on. We are forever grateful for the support (student) has received at Derwen.



From the parent of a student on DofE

Just wanted to say a big thank you to you and the support team for giving (student) the opportunity of DofE. He's absolutely made up to complete the expedition and I have to say, I'm massively impressed you got 10km out of him - that's the furthest he's ever walked.

Mother of student

Just wanted to say how impressive all the Derwen students were yesterday at the audacity dance competition. In addition to superb dancing, their positive attitude and exemplary behaviour were wonderful to see. They are a credit to you and Derwen College. Thank you again for giving them the opportunity to shine - they all grabbed that opportunity and shone like the stars they are.

Father of a student who achieved his gold DofE award

Just wanted to say thank you for helping (student) get his Gold. (Student) and (student's mum) had a lovely day at the Palace. You must be so proud of what you and your team have achieved at Derwen with the D of E programme. It's incredible to have over 20 students from Derwen receiving their Gold at the Palace in that week- wow!

From the parent/carer's survey question: What is working well?

- △ A fantastic experience of living away from home. The teaching environment regarding the chosen pathway.
- △ Peer friendships and independent living skills - I have seen an improvement in both these areas
- △ Independence, relationships, travel training, sports training outside college, range of activities within college, Student Union.
- △ He loves it. He is learning many new skills and his confidence is growing. He enjoys his living situation, his own space but plenty to do when he wants to join in. Feeling his voice is heard.

Development projects

Change and innovation are constant and the Resources and Business Committee leads on the in depth consideration of development proposals and the monitoring of progress with developments.

A **capital expenditure plan** is agreed annually. In 2023 a major consideration was the further adaptation of buildings to ensure the best possible environment for students on the Nurture programme. This also included preparing for the first residential Nurture students, who started at the College in September 2023.

Thomas House was repurposed to ensure it could accommodate the particular needs of this group of learners. Acorns, a building used as a residence by clients, has been refurbished and returned to student accommodation.

The Commercial Outlet Strategy was kept under review. This ensures that commercial initiatives are in line with curriculum needs, industry standards and students' individual needs and aspirations. It aligns with and supports our overarching strategic priorities to:

- △ Ensure our long-term sustainability
- △ Excel in every aspect of our operation
- △ Make the most of our exceptional resources

The strategy encompasses all destinations that offer an opportunity for the Charity to generate a commercial income, both on and off site. Derwen as a destination provides:

- △ Garden Centre & Gift Shop
- △ Walled Garden Café
- △ The Vintage Advantage Charity Shop
- △ Shop @ Derwen online
- △ The Orangery Restaurant
- △ Woodland Walk
- △ Station Café

The Student Union Board raised questions about the accessibility of some parts of the site, and starting with Horticulture and the Student Union building, have worked with relevant staff to identify issues and possible improvements. This has become a cross-college initiative.

In December 21 the staff **Green Environment and Sustainability Committee** (with trustee membership) was formed. The Board supported the College commitment to the Shropshire Zero Carbon pledge. The group's objectives and aims are agreed, members received Carbon Literacy training, and a detailed Reduction of Carbon Footprint Action

Plan was costed, agreed, and is regularly monitored. The Charity received grant funding of £43,200 to cover the costs of engaging ESOS Energy Limited to produce a Heat Decarbonisation Plan (HDP) for the Gobowen Campus. This involved surveying 28 properties across the site with the aim being to support the drive to reduce carbon emissions across the organisation and support with compliance to the grant conditions of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (PSDS). This HDP therefore focused on the actions which can be taken to move away from using gas and oil for the heating and hot water requirements of the buildings and estate.

A whole college scheme was initially prepared and was calculated to cost over £10m. Despite being previously advised that grants of up to 90% were available, the maximum grant that would have been allocated for such a scheme was only £2.6m, a shortfall of £7.4m. The consultants are now looking at significantly smaller schemes that would replace the oldest gas boilers to see what grants would be available and what funds would need to be contributed from reserves.

Leadership, management and staffing

The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) is headed by Meryl Green, the Principal and CEO. During the year the team was strengthened by the internal promotion of two staff. There are now five Directors: Finance and Sustainability; People and Resources; Care, Health and Wellbeing; Learning and Curriculum Development, and Communications, Information and Technology. They have proved a committed and very able team, with whom Trustees work particularly closely. They ensure quality, provide real vision, drive and challenge and are supported by highly competent senior managers.

Included in their responsibilities are safeguarding and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI). Safeguarding is embedded in all that happens and staff training closely monitored. Named Trustees are members of the staff Safeguarding Committee and before Board Standard and Effectiveness meetings they undertake a detailed review, with relevant staff, of current preoccupations, concerns, activity and reports. These are discussed at the Standards and Effectiveness Committee and reported to every Board meeting.

EDI Highlights 2022-23 included:

- △ taking on the Autism Education Trust post 16 licence for Shropshire, which allows Derwen staff to deliver autism awareness training externally in the county
- △ holding the first Derwen Pride event in June.
- △ making available Menopause Support and How to be a Menopause Friendly Manager training.
- △ Student Union Board being invited to talk about disabilities to pupils at a local primary school.

- △ 2 workshops were delivered to 3 groups of children aged 6–8 yrs.
- △ delivering neurodiversity's CPD, focusing on strategies for learners with Dyslexia, Dyspraxia and ADHD to 58 staff.
- △ delivering Assistive Technology training to 58 staff.
- △ delivering unconscious-bias manager-training to 11 staff.

Staff numbers have increased, reflecting the new and expanded provision and the increasing complexity of students' disabilities. Nationally, the labour market has become much tighter but the College has yet to experience the critical recruitment difficulties many are experiencing. Continued professional development is closely monitored and any low completion rates actively followed up. Trustees have been pleased to see, indeed are almost envious of, the continually increasing staff wellbeing facilities and support programme.

Governance

The development of the charity

Derwen College charity has a long pedigree. It was founded in 1927 by Dame Agnes Hunt and was originally associated with the Orthopaedic Hospital in Gobowen. The Derwen Estate was purchased in 1928 and the first trust deed was established on 3 August 1932. It was varied or affected by schemes of the Charity Commission dated 25 January 1968 and 18 August 1972, and then consolidated in the Deed of 29 November 1988.

An incorporated charity was established on 18 July 2013, Derwen College (charity number 1153280, Companies House number 8615826). The former charity remains in existence as Derwen College Trust (charity number 208745) with the sole purpose of managing the permanently endowed property. It appointed as its trustees the new Derwen College charity.

The solicitors drew up a uniting directive which allows a single set of accounts to be drawn up, as the two entities have the same financial reporting period. 'Linked' financial statements for both Companies House and the Charity Commission are submitted annually for reporting purposes.

The regulatory framework

Under the agreed Articles of Association to which the College is now working there are:

at least seven and not more than twelve co-opted trustees, appointed by resolution of the Board conforming to any criteria the Board determines. The term of office of all trustees is five years, with an expectation that usually after three terms of office the Trustee shall be eligible for re-election only after a year has elapsed.

The Board co-opts additional members to committees in order to benefit from people's experience and professional expertise.

Trustees' activity in 2023

The Board works closely with the Senior Leadership Team. A very positive working relationship has been developed, which recognises the need for trustees to provide effective challenge as well as active support.

The report on the 2022 Governance Review, undertaken by a consultant, was studied in detail and an action plan drawn up. At the Board's request, reflection on the procedures and processes adopted for strategic planning and monitoring had been undertaken and this has led to yet more detailed consideration of the external factors influencing the College and the context within which it works. The amount of preparation for meetings trustees need to do has also been a subject of debate.

Much of the detailed analysis and scrutiny of the College's operation is managed by the committees, of which there are four. The Resources and Business Committee was formed in the summer 2020 drawing together work previously undertaken by the Business and Finance, Estates, and Human Resources Committees. A new committee was formed at that time, Audit and Risk Assurance, that undertakes work across the whole College's operation. The Standards and Effectiveness Committee continues its focus on care and the curriculum, with a specific brief for safeguarding and reporting on this at each Board meeting. The Search and Governance Committee monitors the profile of the Board and the quality of governance.

Trustees were delighted this year to be able to become familiar once again with the Gobowen site and visits to the Telford and Walford sites acquainted them with students, staff and activities in the satellites.

Major decisions and areas of activity during 2023 concerned:

- △ The consultancy agreement with Kuwait Society for the Handicapped (KSH)
- △ The expansion of the Nurture provision to include residential students and to broaden the programme for a larger cohort of students.

Trustees give generously of their time, experience and expertise. This is not confined to meetings! Trustee Mark Lord's fundraising concert, which took place at the Holroyd Community Theatre in summer, 22 was such a success that it was repeated in June 23. The concert featured Performing Arts students, with canapes and drinks served by Hospitality & Food students. Ticket sales and a raffle raised £2,000.

Financial management

A going concern

The audited and approved annual accounts are submitted by the due dates to both the Charity Commission and Companies House. After making all appropriate enquiries, very thorough consideration of draft budgets, and cash flow up to 2025, and having taken key strategic decisions, the trustees expect the charity to have adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future. For this reason, they continue to adopt the going concern basis in preparing financial statements. The sale of assets has had a significant positive effect and income from the KSH Project will be used for further development.

Risk management

The trustees regularly examine the principal areas of the College's operations and consider the major risks faced in each. There are established resources and review systems which, under normal conditions, should allow any risk to be managed to an acceptable level in the College's day to day operation. College risk management has two distinct tiers: strategic and operational. The operational level is reviewed on a 'real time' basis and deals with individual departments, students, functions and duties. At the strategic level, the Senior Leadership Team reviews the risk assessment register monthly; it is reviewed at least termly as part of the College quality improvement plan; it is regularly scrutinised by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee. Issues are debated and reported to Board meetings. This includes College pension arrangements, insurances (e.g. cyber security) and trustee responsibilities to ensure these remain in line with current legislation and operational factors.

The College's spacious campus is, when pandemic regulations and guidance allow, open to visitors and customers in the public areas, Derwen Marketplace, and is imaginatively and purposefully managed to enable students to interact with staff and members of the public appropriately and safely. However, the open-plan nature of the campus and the heightened staff awareness of potential hazards necessitate regular reviews. Gates at strategic points on the campus enable a secure area for students, away from the public areas, to be closed off at 9 pm each evening. The central area of the College is pedestrianised. Departmental operational risk management encompasses all locations and individuals. There has been a major programme of installation of CCTV monitoring equipment and installation of intruder alarms and significant upgrading of pathways.

Site safety is reviewed through the Health and Safety Committee, which includes trustee membership, is audited by specialist advisors and monitored by external agencies.

The College provides a safe and supportive environment for learners to access the internet, including social networking sites. Staff across the College give a high priority to all aspects of online safety and the safeguarding team rigorously monitor risk in this area with personalised strategies being implemented to support individuals as appropriate.

Public benefit

Derwen College transforms lives. The number of students who proceed to supported living, students' progress in managing their medication, travel and healthy eating, clients' response to the meaningful activities programme, the amazing number who gain Duke of Edinburgh's Awards each year, the confidence shown in work placements, performances and encounters with the public, are all examples of significant development and growth. The quality of provision is inspected by Ofsted, the Care Quality Commission and other agencies. The Board believes that the College provides excellent value for money to the public purse and that student outcomes mean they can be less dependent on benefits throughout the rest of their lives. The high level of staff expertise and commitment are key elements of the College's management of learning, student support and innovation.

It is also evident that, in meeting the specific complex needs of those with SEND from across the country, Derwen College represents efficient and effective use of public money. These students need access to much specialist provision, and it often needs to be on hand every day and through the night. It is only when sufficient numbers of students come together that employing specialist teachers, therapists, nurses, and care staff becomes achievable and cost effective. Smaller establishments are not able to recruit and retain staff in this way. In order to meet the commitment to post-16 students with significant SEND, national specialist colleges are essential.



Fundraising

- △ Donations £127,783
- △ The Vintage Advantage Shop £112,274
- △ Summer Fete, Sponsored Walk and Christmas Fayre £38,962
- △ Students have undertaken sponsored activities, and staff are not slow to donate their time and energy.
- △ The notable event of 2023 was the Spinathon in April, which raised £15,000.
- △ The Freemasons and Rotary organisations continue to give generously to support the Duke of Edinburgh's Award activities.

The trustees are committed to the necessary capital spending to maintain and enhance the College's facilities and to meet the legal and regulatory requirements. The major appeal for £1,000,000, launched to fund the further development and upgrading of the Agnes Hunt bungalow properties, is ongoing

Investment policy and performance

The College takes a prudent, low risk approach to investments, placing cash surpluses on deposit to attract a return, although this was not especially attractive when interest rates were very low. This is principally because the reserves may need to be utilised during the short to medium term for cash flow and for capital projects. The investment strategy of the Derwen pension scheme has been the subject of a detailed review with very positive results and the scheme is formally reported on annually to the Board.

So much achieved?

During recent years the College has managed a reduction in residential student numbers, a significant increase in day student numbers, a marked increase in the complexity of students' disabilities, the opening of three satellites, an expansion of the curricular programme, a major restructuring of provision for clients, the funding and opening of the hydrotherapy pool, massive improvements to buildings, the sale of some assets, the management of Covid 19's impact, a review of strategic priorities, and a successful international consultancy. This has been achieved through team work, detailed planning, and without recourse to borrowing. The Senior Leadership Team and the trustees believe the charity is now in a strong position; it will embed the many developments and pursue its drive to improve continuously.

And where next?

However national developments continue to offer more unknowns and potential challenges. The Trustees are delighted that the College is in a position to be fully aware of and influence the SEND and AP Change Programme, as members of a Change Programme Partnership. The Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Transformation – Wales, led by the Welsh Government, is making it harder for Welsh students to obtain funding and is being monitored. Nationally, teaching and the qualifications framework are under review and the subject of consultation; this could have a significant impact on programmes. The extension of mayoral led authorities could influence attitudes to funding and placing students.

However, as Principal and CEO Meryl Green said:

At Derwen, we are confident that our model can transform lives, not only in the UK

and a parent wrote:

(Student) called after his annual review and said it went perfect (his exact words).... Once again I can't thank you enough for everything you've done in giving him some



independence and lots of positive encouragement. I am truly grateful, (Student) also feels things are perfect.

Approved by the Board of Trustees on 8 February 2024

Kathleen Kimber, Chair